DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 601 PS 031 277

TITLE	Protect Children Instead of Guns, 2002.
INSTITUTION	Children's Defense Fund, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	6p.; For 2001 report, see PS 030 084.
AVAILABLE FROM	Children's Defense Fund, 25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001. Tel: 800-CDF-1200 (Toll Free); Tel: 202-628-8787; Fax: 202-662-3781; Web site: http://www.childrensdefense.org. For full text: http://www.childrensdefense.org/pdf/gun_report_2002.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Accidents; *Adolescents; *Child Safety; *Children; *Guns; Homicide; *Mortality Rate; Racial Differences; Suicide
IDENTIFIERS	*Child Mortality; Ethnic Differences

ABSTRACT

Beginning with statistics pertaining to children and gun violence in a single year in the United States, this report details trends in child and youth gun deaths. Tables present information on the following: (1) number of firearms deaths by manner and by race from 1979 to 2000; (2) number of firearms deaths by manner for each state and nationwide, 1998-2000; and (3) firearms deaths of children and teenagers, by age, manner, and race/Hispanic origin, 2000. The report indicates that although child and youth gun deaths have dropped 48 percent overall since their peak in 1994, the number remains alarmingly high. Notably, the rate of firearms deaths for children under age 15 in the United States is almost 12 times higher than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. Further, although most child gun deaths are homicides, about 34 percent are the result of suicide and about 6 percent the result of an accidental shooting. The vast majority of firearms used in suicides or accidental shootings come from the victim's home or the home of a relative, friend, or parent of a friend of the victim. The report concludes with a call for additional action to protect children from senseless gun violence. (KB)

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Children's Defense Fund
Washington, DC

2002

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PROTECT CHILDREN INSTEAD OF GUNS 2002

The latest deadly numbers about children and gun violence in a single year show:

- 3,012 children and teens were killed by gunfire
- 1,776 were murdered by gunfire
- 1,007 committed suicide with a firearm
- 193 died from an accidental shooting
- 1,762 were White
- 1,149 were Black
- 568 were Latino
- 433 were under age 15
- 129 were under age 10
- 59 were under age 5
- More children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, and HIV/AIDS *combined.*

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The latest data released in 2002 show that in a single year, 3,012 children and teens were killed by gunfire in the United States—which is one child every three hours, eight children every day, more than 50 children every week. And, every year, four to five times as many children and teens suffer from non-fatal firearm injuries.

Despite these alarming numbers, child and youth gun deaths are on the decline. After peaking in 1994 at more than 5,700 young lives, child and teen firearm deaths have dropped 48 percent overall. Additionally, the number of Black children and teens killed by guns has decreased 55 percent, and the number of White children and teens has dropped 42 percent. Although it is encouraging that the number of child gun deaths per year has fallen dramatically, the number remains disturbingly high. We are still losing too many children. When compared to other industrialized countries, the numbers are even more staggering. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. American children are 16 times more likely to be murdered with a gun, 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun, and nine times more likely to die in a firearm accident than children in these other countries. The needless loss of young lives to gun violence continues to be one of America's silent tragedies.

Firearms deaths, by manner and by race, persons under age 20, 1979-2000
(excludes legal intervention)

Year	Total	Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Unknown	Black	White
1979	3,710	1,651	1,220	726	113	929	2,700
1980	3,749	1,743	1,214	689	103	944	2,739
1981	3,589	1,660	1,213	604	112	944	2,569
1982	3,332	1,498	1,207	550	77	811	2,450
1983	2,962	1,238	1,150	504	70	739	2,155
1984	3,030	1,289	1,114	552	75	716	2,238
1985	3,169	1,322	1,256	519	72	850	2,241
1986	3,349	1,513	1,293	472	71	938	2,337
1987	3,400	1,573	1,281	467	79	1,117	2,199
1988	3,974	1,953	1,387	543	91	1,458	2,405
1989	4,384	2,367	1,380	567	70	1,694	2,563
1990	4,935	2,852	1,476	541	66	2,047	2,753
1991	5,329	3,247	1,436	551	95	2,297	2,878
1992	5,353	3,336	1,426	501	90	2,359	2,834
1993	5,715	3,625	1,460	526	104	2,600	2,925
1994	5,793	3,579	1,565	512	137	2,559	3,024
1995	5,254	3,249	1,450	440	115	2,153	2,898
1996	4,613	2,836	1,309	376	92	1,976	2,475
1997	4,205	2,562	1,262	306	75	1,687	2,357
1998	3,761	2,184	1,241	262	74	1,416	2,197
1999	3,365	1,990	1,078	214	83	1,301	1,934
2000	3,012	1,776	1,007	193	36	1,149	1,762
Total	**89,983**	**49,043**	**28,425**	**10,615**	**1,900**	**32,684**	**54,633**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations; *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 49, No. 8, "Deaths: Final Data for 1999" (September 21, 2001), Table 17; and *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 50, No. 15, "Deaths: Final Data for 2000" (September 16, 2002), Table 18. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

Did you know?

- Children are twice as likely as adults to be victims of violent crime and more likely to be killed by adults than by other children.
- 61 percent of the more than 90,000 youths killed by gunfire between 1979 and 2000 were White; 36 percent were Black.
- Black children and teens are more likely than their White counterparts to be victims of firearm homicide. White children and teens are more likely than their Black counterparts to use a firearm to take their own life.
- The firearm death rate for Black males between ages 15 and 19 is four times that of White males in the same age group.
- Boys, ages 15 to19, are more than seven times more likely than girls to commit suicide with a firearm.

In 2000, homicides accounted for 1,776 gun deaths among children age 19 and younger. Although most child gun deaths are homicides, two out of every five young firearm deaths are the result of suicide or an accidental shooting. One-third of young people killed by guns take their own lives. In 2000, gun suicide accounted for 1,007 child and teen deaths—an average of almost three young people every day. Guns are used in two out of three youth suicides and, unlike other attempted methods, are the most likely to be fatal. Accidental shootings accounted for just over 6 percent of child firearm deaths in 2000; 193 children and teens lost their lives in accidental shootings. As with adolescent suicide, a vast majority of firearms used in unintentional shootings of children and teens come from the victim's home or the home of a relative, friend, or parent of a friend of the victim. A study reported in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that 1.4 million homes with 2.6 million children had firearms that were stored unlocked and loaded or unlocked and unloaded but stored with ammunition. A separate study published in *Injury Prevention* compared firearm ownership in rural and urban areas and found that the prevalence of loaded, unlocked guns in farm households was about twice the level of town households.

We must do more to protect children from the senseless gun violence that has already taken 90,000 young lives in America since 1979.

Learn what you can do to help protect children instead of guns.

Join the Movement to Leave No Child Behind® TODAY!
Call 1-800-CDF-1200 or log onto www.childrensdefense.org

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Firearms deaths of children and teens ages 0 - 19, by manner, 1998-2000

	Total*			Homicide*			Suicide			Accident			Unknown Intent		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Alabama	86	83	52	47	44	31	24	26	17	11	10	3	4	3	1
Alaska	16	23	24	3	9	2	10	11	20	3	1	2	0	2	0
Arizona	102	86	81	49	55	46	43	30	29	6	0	2	4	1	4
Arkansas	69	40	43	36	15	21	24	20	14	3	3	8	6	2	0
California	495	402	402	372	320	319	102	66	66	13	8	16	6	8	1
Colorado	60	63	38	29	34	17	26	24	19	4	5	2	1	2	0
Connecticut	23	18	14	15	13	8	6	5	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Delaware	2	5	2	2	1	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
District of Columbia	30	45	28	27	41	28	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Florida	154	137	100	80	86	58	65	43	35	8	4	7	1	4	0
Georgia	111	117	106	61	67	67	39	41	28	10	5	8	1	4	3
Hawaii	4	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	27	23	13	3	7	0	18	13	11	5	3	2	1	0	0
Illinois	264	228	186	206	182	157	40	37	23	13	7	5	5	2	1
Indiana	92	91	82	57	57	43	27	27	31	7	6	5	1	1	3
Iowa	26	23	21	6	2	1	15	17	18	5	2	2	0	2	0
Kansas	54	31	31	28	12	16	22	14	13	3	3	2	1	2	0
Kentucky	44	39	35	17	21	11	23	11	17	3	5	7	1	2	0
Louisiana	124	93	94	74	52	63	35	27	22	15	11	9	0	3	0
Maine	10	9	8	2	2	1	7	5	7	1	1	0	0	1	0
Maryland	108	98	79	89	78	59	13	16	18	2	0	1	4	4	1
Massachusetts	28	20	11	19	10	9	8	9	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
Michigan	135	116	100	87	66	66	43	40	26	3	7	5	2	3	3
Minnesota	34	45	36	12	15	11	22	27	23	0	3	2	0	0	0
Mississippi	55	72	67	28	37	31	19	17	23	7	11	13	1	7	0
Missouri	89	92	81	52	47	47	32	34	27	4	7	7	1	4	0
Montana	17	19	18	3	2	3	12	12	11	2	5	3	0	0	1
Nebraska	30	18	23	13	6	12	15	11	10	2	1	0	0	0	1
Nevada	48	26	31	26	15	19	20	10	12	1	1	0	1	0	0
New Hampshire	9	4	7	0	1	2	9	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Jersey	49	32	39	35	25	23	13	6	13	1	0	2	0	1	1
New Mexico	47	45	55	25	24	31	14	17	19	8	4	5	0	0	0
New York	123	132	123	88	101	90	28	25	28	5	5	3	2	1	2
North Carolina	88	93	95	43	54	60	30	33	29	13	4	5	2	2	1
North Dakota	7	9	7	2	2	1	4	6	5	1	0	0	0	1	1
Ohio	100	81	75	48	38	40	41	30	30	11	10	4	0	3	1
Oklahoma	61	62	33	22	28	10	30	21	15	6	12	7	3	1	1
Oregon	30	33	27	10	7	3	13	21	22	4	5	2	3	0	0
Pennsylvania	123	124	110	79	77	69	34	39	37	4	5	4	6	3	0
Rhode Island	5	8	10	4	6	8	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	60	51	41	30	22	23	23	20	13	7	8	5	0	1	0
South Dakota	12	14	8	2	1	0	9	9	4	1	3	4	0	1	0
Tennessee	109	85	87	53	47	48	38	22	33	16	12	6	2	4	0
Texas	322	254	252	176	141	117	108	89	108	29	21	21	9	3	6
Utah	32	21	16	12	3	2	19	17	14	1	0	0	0	1	0
Vermont	5	3	4	0	0	0	5	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
Virginia	97	86	72	46	48	41	39	35	26	9	3	3	3	0	2
Washington	66	62	49	28	20	23	32	34	22	5	6	2	1	2	2
West Virginia	19	19	24	5	8	9	12	10	13	1	0	2	1	1	0
Wisconsin	53	74	67	30	41	28	18	27	34	5	6	5	0	0	0
Wyoming	9	11	4	1	0	0	6	11	2	1	0	2	1	0	0
United States	**3,761**	**3,365**	**3,012**	**2,184**	**1,990**	**1,776**	**1,241**	**1,078**	**1,007**	**262**	**214**	**193**	**74**	**83**	**36**

*Total firearm deaths and homicide firearm deaths exclude firearm deaths by legal (police or corrections) intervention and deaths by air rifles.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III: Deaths from 282 selected causes [1998]; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Table III: Deaths from 358 selected causes [1999]; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS, at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/> [2000]. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

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Firearms deaths of children and teens, by age, manner, and race/Hispanic origin, 2000

	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	Total under 20
All races*	13	46	70	304	2,579	3,012
Accident	1	18	18	49	107	193
Suicide	0	0	0	110	897	1,007
Homicide	12	28	50	137	1,549	1,776
Unknown intent	0	0	2	8	26	36
White	6	28	50	224	1,454	1,762
Accident	1	11	11	41	76	140
Suicide	0	0	0	103	741	844
Homicide	5	17	39	75	617	753
Unknown intent	0	0	0	5	20	25
Black	7	13	18	72	1,039	1,149
Accident	0	5	5	7	28	45
Suicide	0	0	0	4	117	121
Homicide	7	8	11	58	888	972
Unknown intent	0	0	2	3	6	11
Hispanic**	1	7	10	44	506	568
Accident	0	2	2	4	12	20
Suicide	0	0	0	7	88	95
Homicide	1	5	8	33	399	446
Unknown intent	0	0	0	0	7	7

*Includes races other than Black or White.
**Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 50, No. 15, "Deaths: Final Data for 2000" (September 16, 2002), Tables 18 and 19. Calculations by Children's Defense Fund.

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to *Leave No Child Behind*® and to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start*, and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for *all* the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick, into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family breakdown.

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants, and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.

Children's Defense Fund

25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-628-8787
1-800-CDF-1200
www.childrensdefense.org

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EFF-089 (1/2003)

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